

This year's annual meeting is a chance for all of us to celebrate the 85th anniversary of an organization that was founded in 1914 to represent the interests of homeowners in Kew Gardens. Under the dedicated leadership of retiring President Al Brand, the Kew Gardens Civic Association has seen its membership rise to more than 300 members.

The Kew Gardens Civic Association has routinely stood at the forefront of the battle to ensure that any new developments in Kew Gardens adhere to applicable zoning regulations and to prevent the illegal use of private homes for commercial purposes. In addition, the Kew Gardens Civic Association has established subcommittees to assist members in the resolution of problems with local, State, and Federal Government agencies.

The members of the Kew Gardens Civic Association elect their officers and governors each year at the organization's annual meeting in accordance with New York States' Not-for-Profit Corporation Law and the Association's By-Laws. The Board of Governors meets periodically to discuss member and community problems as well as to establish Association policy.

The members of the Kew Gardens Civic Association have long been known as innovators and beacons of good will to all those with whom they come into contact. Through their dedicated efforts, they have each helped to improve my constituents' quality of life. In recognition of their many accomplishments on behalf of my constituents, I offer my congratulations to the Kew Gardens Civic Association on the occasion of its 85th anniversary.

#### 84TH COMMEMORATION OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

SPEECH OF

**HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY**

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, April 21, 1999*

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 84th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. As in years past, I am pleased to join my House colleagues on both sides of the aisle in ensuring that the terrible atrocities committed against the Armenian people are never repeated.

The event we come together to remember began on April 24, 1915, when more than 200 religious, political, and intellectual leaders of the Armenian community were brutally executed by the Turkish government in Istanbul. By the time it ended in 1923, this war of ethnic genocide against the Armenian people by the Ottoman Empire claimed the lives of over half the world's Armenian population—an estimated 1.5 million men, women, and children.

Sadly, there are some people who still question the fact that the Armenian genocide even occurred. History is clear, however, that the Ottoman Empire engaged in a systematic attempt to destroy the Armenian people and their culture. The U.S. National Archives contain numerous reports detailing the process by which the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire was systematically decimated. That is one of the reasons we come together every

year at this time: to remind the world that this event did indeed take place and that we must remain forever vigilant in our efforts to prevent all such future calamities.

I am pleased to report that a strong and vibrant Armenian-American community thrives in my district in Northwest Indiana. My predecessor in the House, the late Adam Benjamin, was of Armenian heritage, and Northwest Indiana's strong ties to Armenia continue to flourish. Over the years, members of the Armenian-American community throughout the United States have contributed millions of dollars and countless hours of their time to various Armenian causes. Of particular note are Mrs. Vicki Hovanessian and her husband, Dr. Raffi Hovanessian, residents of Indiana's First Congressional District, who have worked to improve the quality of life in Armenia, as well as in Northwest Indiana. In fact, Dr. Hovanessian serves his country and his faith as the personal physician to His Holiness the Catholicos, enabling His Holiness to travel to Rome for the recent opening of the Armenian exhibit at the Vatican library—an event attended by His Holiness the Pope. Mrs. Hovanessian has worked to increase awareness of Armenian culture through her efforts to showcase the work of Armenian artists in exhibitions here in the United States. On a national level, their efforts together were integral to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, which has grown and thrived since it was established. They played a key role in raising \$5 million for Armenian causes during His Holiness the Catholicos' recent visit to the United States to celebrate the historic event.

Two other Armenian-American families in my congressional district, Heratch and Sonya Doumanian and Ara and Rosy Yeretsian, have also contributed greatly toward charitable works in the United States and Armenia. Dr. and Mrs. Doumanian have dedicated their lives to supporting Armenians both in this country and in Armenia. These distinguished citizens were actively involved in the observance of the 100th anniversary of Armenian independence and Dr. Doumanian was recently honored for his selfless endeavors with the Crystal Globe Award from the Asian-American Medical Society. I was privileged to be there when Dr. Doumanian received that acknowledgment of his innumerable contributions to his family and his faith.

The projects undertaken by these dedicated individuals, together with hundreds of other members of the Armenian-American community, have helped to finance many essential projects in Armenia, including the construction of new schools, a mammography clinic, and a crucial roadway connecting Armenia to Nagorno Karabagh.

The Armenian people have a long and proud history. In the fourth century, they became the first nation to embrace Christianity. During World War I, the Ottoman Empire was ruled by an organization, known as the Young Turk Committee, and became allied with Germany. Amid fighting in the Ottoman Empire's eastern Anatolian provinces, the historic heartland of the Christian Armenians, Ottoman authorities ordered the deportation and execution of all Armenians in the region. By the end of 1923, virtually the entire Armenian population of Anatolia and western Armenia had been either killed or deported.

While it is important to keep the lessons of history in mind, we must also remain eternally vigilant in order to protect Armenia from new and more hostile aggressors. Even now, as we rise to commemorate the accomplishments of the Armenian people and mourn the tragedies they have suffered, Turkey and other countries are attempting to break Armenia's spirit by engaging in a debilitating blockade against this free nation.

That is why three years ago, I led the fight in the House of Representatives to free Armenia from Turkey's vicious blockade by offering an amendment to the Fiscal Year 1997 Foreign Operations appropriations bill. Under current law, U.S. economic assistance may not be given to any country that blocks humanitarian assistance from reaching another country. Despite the fact that Turkey has been blocking humanitarian aid for Armenia for many years, the President has used his waiver authority to keep economic assistance for Turkey intact. My amendment, which passed in the House by a bipartisan vote of 301–118, would have prevented the President from using his waiver authority and would have cut off U.S. economic aid to Turkey unless it allowed humanitarian aid to reach Armenia. Unfortunately, my amendment was not included in the final version of the Foreign Operations appropriations bill and the Turkish blockade of Armenia continues unabated.

Furthermore, last month, I testified before the Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee, as I have for each of the past several years, to request that the subcommittee maintain its practice of reserving one-third of NIS funding for the Southern Caucasus; sixty percent of those funds for Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan; and no less than twenty-five percent of Southern Caucasus funds for Armenia alone. I also argued that the current ban on assistance to Azerbaijan should remain in place until Azerbaijan takes serious, demonstrable steps to ending their current conflict with Armenia, starting with an end to their own blockade.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues, Representatives JOHN PORTER and FRANK PALLONE, for organizing this special order to commemorate the 84th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. Their efforts will not only help to bring needed attention to this tragic period in world history, but also serve as a reminder to remain vigilant in the fight to protect basic human rights and freedoms around the world.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. THOMAS G. TANCREDO**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, April 27, 1999*

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, Thursday of last week, I returned to my home in Littleton, Colorado to pray for the victims of the shooting at Columbine High School. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on the motion to instruct conferees for H.R. 1141, the Supplemental Appropriations Bill (rollcall No. 96).